

Middlesex Coalition for Children

Testimony of Izzi Greenberg of Middlesex Coalition for Children
In Support of: H.B. 5557 An Act Concerning Recruitment and Retention of Early
Childhood Educators
Education Committee of the Connecticut Legislature, March 7th, 2016

Thank you to the leadership and members of the Education Committee for this opportunity to provide written testimony. My name is Izzi Greenberg and I am the director of the Middlesex Coalition for Children, a group working to improve outcomes for low-income children and children of color in Middlesex County.

I am writing today to testify in favor of House Bill 5557, An Act Concerning Recruitment and Retention of Early Childhood Educators

The purpose of the bill is to establish an early childhood educator compensation schedule for early childhood educators that ensures the retention and recruitment of qualified educators, secures a standard of living that meets such educators' needs, and reflects the true costs associated with quality standards for early childhood care and education programs.

The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, of which I am a steering committee member, supports this bill. It requires OEC to develop a wage scale for early educators in publicly funded programs (those receiving School Readiness, Child Development Centers, and State Head Start) and to develop a payment rate scale to meet those wages.

We know the benefits of all children attending a high-quality preschool. But what does quality mean? One thing we know it means is having well trained, well educated, happy, healthy teachers spending consistent time with children in a great school environment. Connecticut has made great strides on a number of these measures...we've created solid teacher education requirements, we've created oversight and licensing, accreditation, and various other mechanisms to test for the effectiveness of the centers that are teaching children.

But we haven't come up with a system whereby the teachers are paid what they are worth, and what they need to be paid to raise healthy children themselves. We mandate education, which is a good thing, but we don't pay them well enough to pay back their student loans. We don't pay well enough to keep them in the field, so that once they are established and experienced, we lose them to a higher paying job.

We owe our children and their teachers more. It is time to take a hard look at the compensation for some of our states most vital and most underappreciated workers. I urge you to support this bill, which will begin to bring wages for early educators into balance. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Izzi Greenberg, Executive Director